
Imprimatur.

Libellus cui Titulus [The
Plain-Man's Devotion,
Part I.

Jan. 5.
1687.

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A
M E T H O D
O F
Daily Devotion.

Fitted to the meanest
Capacities. *R*

By *W. ASSHETON*, D. D.
Rector of *Beckenham* in
Kent, and Chaplain to
his Grace the Duke of
ORMOND.

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To the Inhabitants of
the Parish of Becken-
ham in Kent.

HAVING been instru-
mental, through
God's Blessing, to fix your
Belief, I shall now proceed,
by the same gracious assi-
stance, to direct your Pra-
ctice. And do very chear-
fully comply with an invi-
tation to so useful a Task,
as being fully convinced,
That it is much more pro-
fitable, both for me and

A 3

my

THE PREFACE.

my Parish, to spend my time in Devotion and practical Discourses, than in these unpleasing Disputes.

Now the more effectually to perswade you to a Holy and Religious Life, pray seriously consider this short Admonition.

You must not always be in this World; but in a very little time (perhaps before to Morrow-Morning) you may be removed into the next. And then you will unalterably be fixt in an Eternal State, either of Happiness or Misery.

Now

The Preface.

Now as in all other Cases prudence doth direct you to Provide for the worst, so chiefly it ought in the concern of your Souls. Wherein if you do miscarry, the mistake will be very fatal: you are utterly ruined.

Let me therefore beg of you (and I do it in Christ's stead) immediately to break off your Sins by repentance. And resolve without delay to make your Peace with God, before you go hence and be no more seen.

The Preface.

To assist you in this necessary work, is the charitable Design of these little Papers. Wherein I shall in the most familiar manner even lead you by the hand; and shall shew you step by step what I would have you to do. And if with an honest and sincere heart, you will observe these following Directions; I trust we shall comfortably meet at the Day of the Lord Jesus.

William Assheton.

A
M E T H O D
O F

Daily Devotion.

IN the Morning when you first
awake, offer up your first
Thoughts and Words to God,
saying,

*Glory be to God the Father,
who hath made me and all the
world.*

*Glory be to God the Son, who
hath redeemed me and all Man-
kind.*

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Glory be to God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God.

O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, Three Persons and One God: have mercy upon me a miserable Sinner.

As you are rising, say,

I laid me down and slept, and rose up again, for the Lord sustained me. [Psalm 3. 5.]

Whilst you are putting on your Cloaths, consider what you are to do that Day. And if any Company or Business which you are to be engaged in, shall be likely to tempt or to draw you to any Sin: As to Intemperance in Meats or Drinks; to *[Lust, Anger, &c.]* then Arm your self with Resolutions against it, and say,

Lord

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Lord, lead me not into Temptation, but deliver me from Evil.

I do renounce the Devil and all his works; the Pomps and Vanity of this wicked World, and all the sinful Lusts of the Flesh. I believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith. And I will keep Gods Holy Will and Commandments, and walk in the same all the Days of my Life.

All this, O my God, I am bound by the vow of my Baptism to believe and do; and by thy help so I will.

As soon as you are drest, kneel down by your Bed-side, and with great Reverence and Devotion, as in God's Presence, say your Prayers thus; or in the like manner.

*Morning Prayer for a
Private Person.*

I Bless and Praise thy Holy Name, most gracious God, for all thy mercies bestowed upon me, from the time of my Birth to this present moment. I thank thee for the Preservation of the last Night; and for the sweet Sleep and refreshment which I have enjoyed. O pardon and forgive me my manifold Sins [particularly — *here mention the greatest of thy Sins.*] I am truly sorry that I have offended thee; and fully do resolve to do so no more. Assist me this day in the Works of my Calling; and prosper all my lawful
ful

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ful Undertakings. Give me Grace to be true and just in all my Dealings; and to do unto all men, as I would they should do unto me. Help me to be contented with my present Condition. To be diligent in all my Duties. Watchful against all Temptations. So humble and modest, chaste and temperate, and so moderate in my most lawful Enjoyments, that they never become a Snare to me. Lord, I live here in a troublesome sinful World: But do thou take me into thy Protection, and then I am safe; Guide me by thy Counsel here, and at last bring me to thy Glory. And this I humbly beg for the sake of Jesus Christ, my dear Lord and only Saviour,

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our, who hath taught me thus
to pray,

Our Father, &c.

After Break fast (at which the
greatest part of the Household are
supposed to be present) let the
Master of the Family, or some
other by his appointment, di-
stinctly and devoutly read this,
or the like, following Prayer.

Morning Prayer for a Family.

O Holy Lord God Al-
mighty; before whom
all Knees do bend, and to
whom all Creatures in Hea-
ven and Earth do bow and
obey. Behold here poor,
impotent, guilty Creatures
humbly prostrate before thy
Throne: Adoring thy Great-
ness;

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ness ; and admiring thy Goodness : and desiring nothing more than faithfully to serve thee all the days of our Lives. For thou only art Holy ; Thou only art the Lord : And Glory be to thee, O Lord most High.

Praised be thy Name O Lord, from the rising up of the Sun to the going down of the same. Thou art our God , and we will thank thee : Thou art our God, and we will praise thee. We laid us down and slept, and rose up again , for the Lord sustained us. Thou hast lightened our Eyes , that we slept not in Death. Thou hast delivered us from the Terrors of the Night , and from the Evil that walketh in Darkness.

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ness. From Fire and Robbery, and all other sad Accidents. Thou renewest thy Mercies to us every Morning; and has given us one Day more, to serve thee and call upon thy Name.

O Lord our heavenly Father, Almighty and Everlasting God, who hast safely brought us to the beginning of this Day; defend us in the same by thy mighty Power; and grant that this Day we fall into no Sin, neither run into any kind of Danger; but that all our doings may be ordered by thy Governance, to do always that is righteous in thy sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And we beg thy Blessing for all Mankind. More particularly

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ticularly for these Kingdoms in which we live. Bless, save and defend the King, and all the Royal Family, with all Orders of Men amongst us, both in Church and State. Bless all our Friends and kind Relations. Those that have done us any Good; Lord reward them. Those that have done or wish'd us any Evil; Father forgive them.

Comfort all those who are any ways afflicted or distressed in Mind, Body, or Estate. Give them patience under their Sufferings, and a happy issue out of all their Afflictions.

These mercies, and whatever else thou knowest to be most convenient for us, we do

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do humbly beg, in the name,
and for the sake of Christ Je-
sus our only Mediator and In-
tercessor; who hath taught
us thus to pray,

Our Father, &c.

Prayers being finished, as you
go first out of your Doors, or as
you return into the House, say,

*Lord, Bless my going out and
my coming in, from this time forth
for evermore. [Psal. 121. 8.]*

When you harness your Hor-
ses, or take the Plough into
your hand, or begin any other
Work, say,

*Prosper thou the work of my
hands, O Lord; O prosper thou
my handy-work. [Psalm 90.
17.]*

Having

HAVING thus commended your selves to God, you are now under his Care and Protection. And may comfortably expect his Blessing upon you and yours. Which, he for his part, will most certainly grant; provided, that you lead the rest of the Day according to this beginning. In order to which, be very careful *First* of your

Thoughts.

IF any idle, wandering and impertinent Thoughts; any wanton, lustful, and lascivious Thoughts; any envious, murdering, and malicious Thoughts, shall arise in your hearts; then presently reject

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reject them, by thinking upon something else, and say,

Lord cleanse the Thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of thy holy Spirit.

Secondly, Take heed of your

Words.

1. **B**Eware of horrid *Cursing* and profane *Swearing*. And do not think to excuse such Extravagance by saying; *I was Provok'd, or I am naturally Passionate: It is my Temper, and I cannot help it.* Which in plain English is this, *I have a mind to Curse and to Swear, and I will do it.* Know therefore that God hath given you Reason, and the Grace of his Holy Spirit, whereby to curb your Natures, and restrain

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restrain your vicious Inclinations, both in this and every other Instance.

2. To be noted for *Lying* (besides the Sin and Guilt in respect of God) will make you useless to the World. No Body will trust you. Or, if they can help it, will ever meddle with you. I advise you therefore (*Children* and *Servants*) when you have committed a fault, do not dare to excuse it with a *Lye*; but confess it freely. And then both your *Parents* and *Masters*, if they are prudent Persons, will more chearfully forgive you.

3. Let no filthy Communication proceed out of your Mouth.

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Mouth. Avoid all obscene lascivious Discourse as you would the Plague; for 'tis as infectious, and kindles such a fire of Lust, as without repentance will certainly bring you to the fire of Hell.

4. Avoid that prattling Gossiping Humour of talking about other Mens matters, and censuring their Affairs. But *study to be quiet, and to do your own Business.* And if Religion will not restrain you; then be admonished in point of prudence, that *Silence is soon answered.*

For

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For the better regulating
of your

Actions.

Observe that Golden Rule
of our Blessed Saviour;
*Whatsoever you would that men
should do to you, do ye even so to
them, Matth. 7. 12.* Let this
teach you to be true and just
in all your Dealings. To be
very punctual and exact in all
your Promises and Bargains.
*Not to go beyond or defraud your
Brother in any matter, for the
Lord is the avenger of all such.*
1 Thess. 4. 6.

2. Take heed of excessive
Drinking; which too often con-
cludes your Bargains. And
if your head shall be stronger
than

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than your Neighbours, then to abuse his Weakness, and to impose upon him under such Circumstances, is a very base and dishonest practice.

3. Beware of immoderate *Anger*; or (as you phrase it) *of being in Passion*: the consequences of which are many times dismal and amazing. For you may do that in the height of a Provocation, which, if it doth not cut you off in the midst of your Days, will bring your gray hairs with sorrow to the Grave. When therefore your *Children* or your *Servants* have committed a fault, be not either too rash, or too severe in your Censures; but treat them

them with Reason, and argue the Case calmly with them. And if after fair Admonitions they will not regard you ; then it will be prudent to dismiss such Servants , and correct your Children.

4. Let young Persons be admonished to *flee youthful Lusts* : and to take heed of all filthy polluting practices ; which are very displeasing to a pure and holy God. Remember your Baptismal vow: In which you did *renounce the carnal desires of the flesh, so that you will not follow nor be led by them.* Where observe, You did not promise never to *have* those Desires (for whilst you are young and healthful it cannot be otherwise) But you
C only

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only promised, *not to follow nor be led by them*, i. e. not to gratifie those Desires and Inclinations in any unlawful way, not to be led and prompted by them to commit any Sin; or to do any thing which God hath forbidden. If therefore, after *Prayers, Fasting, hard Labour*, and other *Methods of Mortification*, you are still troublesome and uneasy; then make use of the last Remedy; which becomes a Duty to those, who cannot live innocently without it. I shall commend it to you in *St. Paul's words*. *If they cannot contain, let them Marry: for it is better to Marry than to burn; 1 Cor. 7 9. Marriage is honourable in all, and the Bed undefiled: But Whoremongers and*

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and Adulterers God will judge.
Heb. 13. 4.

Being tempted to uncleanness or any other Sin; lift up your heart unto God, and say,

O Thou who art faithful, do not suffer me to be tempted above that I am able; but with the Temptation also make a way to escape, that I may be able to bear it. 1 Cor. 10. 13.

5. Take heed and beware of
COVETOUSNESS, Luke 12.
15. For the love of Money
is the root of all evil: which
while some coveted after
they have erred from the
Faith, and pierced themselves
through with many Sorrows.
1 Tim. 6. 10. Be not deceived
— nor Thieves, nor **COVE-**
C 2 **TOUS-**

TOUS—*nor Extortioners shall inherit the Kingdom of God.*
1 Cor. 6. 9, 10.

From these and many other places of Scripture, you are plainly convinced, That Covetousness is a most perplexing and destructive practice. And as such would more carefully be avoided by you, were it not so difficult to convince you of your guilt. For should I propose this Question to every *Individual* in the whole Parish; Are you guilty of this Sin of Covetousness? I should doubtless find a great number of *frugal, careful, provident* Persons, but not a *Covetous* man amongst you all. And therefore, for your conviction, I shall briefly

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ly shew you what *Covetousness* is, and when a man may be truly said to be guilty of that Sin.

COVETOUSNESS is an irregular unlawful Desire, of getting and keeping wealth.

Now your Desires are then irregular and unlawful, when they do transgress those bounds and limits, which Almighty God by his Laws hath prescribed to them.

For God, who is a God of Order, hath establish'd this method. *Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, Mat. 6. 33. Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God, 1 Cor. 10. 31.*

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Intimating ; That the chief end and design, the great business for which you are sent into the World ; it is to *Glorifie God, by saving of your Souls.* And therefore when God is dishonour'd, and the welfare of your Souls is neglected ; then are your desires or your actions irregular and unlawful.

Particularly ; If these Desires shall once prompt you, to cozen and cheat and defraud your Neighbour in any instance whatsoever : As, By telling Lyes to help out a good Bargain ; By false Weights and Measures ; By not paying Servants and Workmens wages ; By not discharging just Debts when it is in your power ; but
keeping

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keeping other mens Money, to their prejudice, that you your selves may trade with it; In these and many other Instances you are apparently Covetous.

Nay further; Though you can truly affirm, as you often boast, that you never wronged any man living: But are most just and punctual in all your dealings; and were never worse than your word. Yet if your desire of getting an Estate shall be so eager, that you shall neglect the Duties of Religion! If, for instance, you cannot stay to say your Prayers in a Morning for fear of neglecting your work! And if when you come into God's House, there to attend his immediate

C 4 Service,

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Service, you are then thinking of your worldly Concerns ; how you may *turn your Penny*, and contrive your Affairs to the best Advantage ! if the *Festivals* and *Fasts* of the Church (those Market-days for your Souls) shall be a burthen to you ; saying with those in the Prophet ; *When will the New-Moon be gone ; that we may sell Corn ? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth Wheat ?* Amos 8. 5.

If the care and concern for your Bodies, which should be subordinate to that of your Souls, shall be thus preferr'd before it ; your desires are then irregular and unlawful, and you are evidently guilty

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ty of this Sin of Covetousness.

Nay yet further ; Though your Estates may be very honestly gotten ; yet if you do not use them as you ought, nor employ them to those ends for which they were given, you are still Covetous.

Now the only end of wealth, is to supply our occasions, and to enable us to do good both to our selves and others.

He therefore that lives meanly and below his Estate, when there is no reason so to do. That shall pinch and pine his own body, by de-

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nying it those necessary refreshments it wants. That shall neglect the Education and the Marriage of his Children; as resolving to part with his Money and his Life together. Finally, He who shall transgress that most necessary Duty, of being charitable to the Poor, and relieving those that are in Distress; *his Gold and his Silver*, for want of use, *is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against him*, James 5. 3.

Let your Conversation be without Covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. Heb. 13. 5.

Be

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Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts, and minds through Christ Jesus, Phil. 4. 6, 7.

Being return'd home in the Evening, and your work being finished; before you go to Bed, let the Master of the Family again call his Household together. And I wish I could perswade you, every night to read some portion of *Holy Scripture*. But lest that should seem too great a burden upon the Week-day, I shall reserve it as a proper Task for the *Lord's-day* and the Festivals of the Church (for the due observation of which I do purpose, God willing, to give you particular Directions in another Paper.) However though you may

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want time, or are too much wearied to read in your *Bible*, yet pray do not omit to commend your selves to God's Protection, in this or the like manner.

Evening Prayer for a Family.

A Almighty and Everlasting God; and in Jesus Christ our most Merciful and Gracious Father. We thy poor unworthy Creatures, do most humbly present our selves before thee: to confess our sins, and to beg thy pardon. To acknowledge thy mercies, and to bewail our abuses of them.

We have transgressed our Duty to Thee, our Neighbour, and our selves: And
that

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that both in Thought, in Word and in Deed: by doing those Things which thou hast expressly forbidden; and by neglecting those Duties thou hast commanded us. And this not only through Ignorance and Frailty, but sometimes knowingly and wilfully; with repeated vows and resolutions to the contrary. Nay, O Lord, we have despised that Goodness of thine which should lead us to Repentance: hardning our hearts against all those means, which thou hast used for our amendment.

And now, Lord, what can we expect having done these Things, but to be utterly abhorred and forsaken by thee?

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thee? that is indeed the due reward of our sins. But, O Lord, there is mercy with thee that thou mayst be feared.

O fit us for that mercy, by giving us a deep and hearty Repentance; a sincere Contrition; a true sorrow for, and perfect hatred of all our sins, with a firm resolution to forsake them. And then, according to thy Goodness, let thine anger and thy wrath be turned away from us. Look upon us in thy Son, our Blessed Saviour; and for the Merits of his Sufferings pardon all our Sins.

And since we are not able of our selves so much as to
think

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think one good Thought ;
we beseech thee to work in
us both to will and to do ac-
cording to thy good pleasure.
And by the Grace of thy
Holy Spirit, do thou so re-
new and purify our hearts,
that we may become new
Creatures ; utterly forsaking
every evil way, and living in
constant , sincere , universal
Obedience to thee all the
rest of our Days.

Make us humble and mo-
dest : patient and submissive :
chaste and temperate : just
and righteous : kind and
charitable : diligent in our
Callings ; and zealous for
thy Glory. That so having
behaved our selves as good
and faithful Servants , we
may by thy mercy at the last
be

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be received into the joy of our Lord.

And we desire, thou knowest, the good of all Mankind as well as our own. Particularly we implore thy Mercies towards these Kingdoms wherein we live. Remember not Lord our Offences, nor the Offences of our Forefathers; but spare us good Lord, and have patience with us, if perhaps we may bring forth better Fruit, becoming thy holy Gospel, and all the care thou hast taken about us. Lord save and defend the King, and establish his Throne in Righteousness: that we may see many happy days under his Government.

Bless

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Bless him and us in all his Relations ; in his Council ; in all the Nobility, Clergy, Gentry and Commonalty. That every one of them may uprightly and zealously do their Duty ; to the maintenance of thy true Religion, and the peace and welfare of these Nations.

Comfort all those who are any ways afflicted or distressed, in Mind, Body or Estate, especially those who suffer for the Testimony of a good Conscience ; give them patience under their Sufferings ; and an happy issue out of all their Afflictions.

Let

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Let thy Blessings rest upon this Family, and all that are near and dear to us. Grant both to them and us whatsoever thou seest necessary, either for our Bodies or our Souls.

And we desire to return our thankful Acknowledgments, for all thy mercies, both Spiritual and Temporal. Particularly, for thy Preservation of us all this Day past. Let the same good Providence watch over us this night. Keep us by thy Grace from all works of Darkness; and defend us by thy Power from all Dangers. From Fire and Robbery, and all other sad Accidents. Grant us moderate refreshing sleep, such as may fit us for thy Service
the

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the Day following. That after the few Days and Nights we have to pass in this world, we may come to thy eternal rest together with Christ Jesus. In whose blessed Name and Words we further Pray, saying,

Our Father, &c.

After Prayers the whole family doth betake themselves to their rest. And being come into your Chamber, sit down a little, and consider how you have spent the Day past. Glance over in your Thoughts what you have said and done. Observe likewise what particular Blessings and Deliverance you have received. If your Behaviour hath been regular; Bless God for it. If sinful and extravagant in any instance, do not dare to go into your Bed, till you have beg'd his Pardon. Many as healthful as your self have been found

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found dead the next Morning,
Kneel down therefore, and distinctly say this, or the like Prayer.

Evening-Prayer for a private person.

I Bless and praise thy holy Name, most Gracious God, for all thy mercies bestowed upon me, from the time of my Birth to this present moment. I thank thee for the Preservation of the day past. Blessed be thy Name for my continued health, and food and raiment. Blessed be thy Name that my Bones are not broken: That I am not now groaning under the sorest pains, but that I live at ease, and dwell in safety Night and Day. O

O Pardon and forgive me my manifold Sins [particularly — *[here mention the sins of the day past.]* I am truly sorry that I have thus offended thee; and do fully purpose to do so no more.

Assist me, by thy Grace and holy Spirit, to make good these pious Resolutions: and with an honest sincerity to continue in my Duty, both towards thee my God, and towards my Neighbour.

I beg thy Blessing for *[my Wife and Children, my Husband and Children, Father and Mother, Brethren and Sisters, Master; Mistress — You must name these Relations, according as you stand related.]* O that all my
my

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my friends may be thine.
And if I have any Enemies ;
Father forgive them.

Relieve and comfort all
those that are in any Distress.
Make the Earth to bring
forth its increase in due sea-
son, and let all honest and
industrious People be succeed-
ed in their Labours.

Take me into thy care
and protection this Night.
And when I shall awaken
again in the Morning ; help
me to employ all my renew-
ed strength to thy Honour
and Glory ; through Jesus
Christ : in whose Blessed
name and words I commend
my self to thy infinite mer-
cies, saying,

Our Father, &c.

This

This Prayer may be likewise said in the Family; when there is not time, by reason of some extraordinary occasions, for the other. But then you must change the number: saying all along (*we*) for (*I*) and (*us*) for (*me*) and (*our*) for (*my*) &c.

At your going to Bed, say,

*I will lay me down in peace,
and take my rest, for it is thou,
Lord, only that makest me dwell
in safety, Psal. 4. 9.*

Having composed your self to sleep, close your Eyes with the last words of your Blessed Saviour, saying.

*Father into thy hands I com-
mend my Spirit. Luke 23.
46.*

I have

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I have given you no Directions about Children; since your own prudence will best suggest such Instructions, as are most suitable to their different Capacities. But let me beg of you, both as to Children and Servants, to take up Joshua's resolution; *As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.*

FINIS.

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